

Finland

Women in decision-making: **2.28/5**

Socio-economic position of women: **1.64/5**

Violence against women: **3/5**



Highlights

43% women in parliament and 47% senior ministers

19.4% gender pay gap

61.8% of women in full-time employment (gender gap 5.2%)

24.5% gender gap in employment for parents with children under 12

79% pay for maternity leave (18 weeks)

0.03 shelter places for women victims of violence per 10,000 inhabitants

Access to abortion is available on demand free of charge

TRENDS:



Ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on violence against women is underway. A public debate has been launched on the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services. Also, the criminal law on human trafficking is under review to allow more sensitivity to the vulnerability of victims, and lower the threshold of securing convictions for traffickers in cases of sexual exploitation. Finally, in 2012, the first ever report on murders within the family in Finland was published by the Minister of Interior.

Also, a new Child and Youth Policy Programme (2012-2015) is being implemented which aims at more gender-sensitive education.



In municipal elections held in October 2012, for the first time since the 1950s, the proportion of female candidates fell (by 1.6%), to reach 38.8%. The proportion of women in municipal councils fell to 36.2%.

In 2012, the city of Espoo (the second largest city in Finland) decided to discontinue funding its only shelter for victims of violence. Similar discussions have started in other cities.

The trend of boys and young men committing suicide is decreasing, whereas an increasing number of girls and young women under 24 take their own lives.

UNDERSTANDING FINLAND

Together with neighbouring Sweden, Finland achieves a high rate of female representation in political decision-making, without the benefit of binding regulation. 40% of the leaders of major political parties are women. However, the recent decrease of women's representation in municipal government highlights the ever-present risk of a backlash against the increasing power of women's voices.

Although less than a 1/3 of private company board members are female (27%), Finland has the highest percentage of women on boards in the EU. Only public bodies are required (by political decision rather than law) to have an "equitable proportion" (at least 40%) of both women and men.

The socio-economic position of women in Finland is less secure. Although according to the latest statistics (2010), almost 62% of women work full-time and women's salaries have risen faster than those of men, the gender pay gap remains significant at 19.4% and is narrowing only slowly. Inadequate remuneration of maternity leave (79% of salary) and a low proportion of infants receiving formal care (28% of under 3 year olds and 77% of those between 3 and school-age) lead to a large gender differential in employment rates for parents of children under 12 (24.5%). In addition, only 39% of dependent elderly persons receive formal care.

The trend to close shelters for women victims of violence demonstrates a wider lack of understanding for the gender dimension of family violence. There is no decrease in the high numbers of women murdered by their male spouses and ex-spouses. The government's National Action Plan on Violence Against Women is ambitious, but lacks funding and human resources.

Regarding sexual education and reproductive rights, on the other hand, the country has reached very high standards.